RESEARCH

MANITOBA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A COMPARISON OF
TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS
AND TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS:

PART II

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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COMPARISON OF TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS: PART II

ABSTRACT

The purposes of the study were to determine: (1) whether teachers were being asked to teach subjects for which they were not trained; (2) if this occurs, what areas are affected; and, (3) what future directions might be considered for teacher training and retraining. French and Special Education were identified as potential areas of concern.

Part I of the study, completed in October 1981, addressed numbers of teachers who might be used for French language instruction, who were presently teaching other subjects.

Part II of the study was conducted in seven selected Manitoba school divisions. The study utilized the following data sources: Media File data; existing Departmental data (eg., permits and letters of authority issued); teachers, principals, superintendents, special divisional co-ordinators/consultants; and, professional development chairpersons in the seven divisions; as well as, representatives of teacher training institutions and the Manitoba Teachers' Society.

The conclusions and implications of the study are discussed under the following topics:

1. Shortage Areas - A shortage of teachers still occurs in certain subject areas (eg. French language, Music). A practical way to combat these shortages would be to emphasize channelling preservice students into these areas.

2. French Language Instruction - As indicated by analysis in Part I of the study, a potential "talent pool" of French language teachers may exist. Increasing demands for French language teachers may necessitate utilization of this talent pool. The high demand for immersion teachers in divisions in close proximity to Winnipeg may draw teachers from other divisions. If teachers are moving from Francais to immersion classrooms, some inservicing or retraining may be required.

3. Special Education - The consensus among the groups surveyed was that many classroom teachers were not prepared to deal with special needs students. More exposure during preservice, as well as special inservices for classroom teachers, might help to rectify the situation.

4. Teacher Qualifications - Approximately 85% of teachers surveyed had a post-secondary major related to one of their teaching subjects. However, analysis on a subject by subject basis, revealed that teachers had varied teaching loads, which included both subjects for which they did and did not have training. Long-range planning, or perhaps a reallocation of present staff within divisions, might decrease this occurence.

   Three-quarters of teachers who did not have a post-secondary major in any subject taught, indicated a desire to change their teaching assignment, usually to their area of expertise. These teachers, as well as those with varied teaching assignments, are potential users of specific inservicing and retraining.

5. Teacher Training and Retraining - Concerning preservice training, better information dissemination to high school students might help to channel students considering a teaching career into shortage areas. Also, special opportunity bursaries could be used to encourage students into areas of "critical need."

   A clientele which could take advantage of retraining opportunities appears to exist. Teachers appear predisposed to inservicing, but they would like it to be more specialized. This suggests greater individualization in retraining/inservicing offerings. Utilization of new modes of interactive technology might aid in the development of individualized options. This might also help to equalize retraining opportunities for teachers in rural and remote areas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

		Page
	Acknowledgements	i
	Abstract	ii
I.	Introduction	iv
II.	Summary of Findings	vi
	A. Operational Definitions	vi
	B. Limitations	vi
	C. Highlights and Conclusions	vii
	D. Implications	ix

I. INTRODUCTION

During the last few years there has been some concern expressed by educators regarding the various consequences of enrollment decline. One area of potential concern is the possibility of teachers being given teaching assignments for which they do not feel adequately trained. Teachers may be reassigned to subject areas where a shortage of teachers still exists. In particular, the areas of French instruction and special education are potential areas of concern.

This study attempts to address the basic questions of: Does a problem exist? If so, to what extent does it exist, and, in what areas? In addition, the study is designed to indicate future directions for policies regarding teacher training and retraining, as these issues are directly related to concerns regarding teacher qualifications.

In order to accommodate the diversity inherent in this study, the project was divided into two parts. The first utilized the 1980-81 school year Media File to obtain some baseline data on numbers of potential French teachers. This second part of the study is comprised of a series of in-depth case studies conducted in seven selected school divisions.

The objectives of Part II of the study were as follows:

Objective 1 - To determine the extent to which a mismatch appears between teachers' qualifications and subjects taught.

Objective 2 - To determine specifically in which of the following, if any, a mismatch of teaching assignments occurs:

- (i) geographic areas
- (ii) grade levels
- (iii) subject areas.

Objective 3 - To determine teacher, principal and superintendent attitudes towards:

- (i) teaching assignments
- (ii) teachers' confidence in dealing with special needs students.

Objective 4 - To estimate where possible, the approximate numbers of French teachers required in 1982-83 by:

(i) geographic area
(ii) grade level
(iii) program.

Objective 5 - To describe potential options in the area of teacher training and retraining.

The findings of this study will be presented by objective.

II. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A. Operational Definitions

For purposes of this report the following definitions will apply:

ACE program - this refers to the Advanced Certificate in Education offered through the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Administrators - this refers to principals and superintendents.

Letter of Authority - this is authorization allowing a person to teach who had "completed the academic requirements and at least half the educational requirements for certification".*

Major - this refers to a teacher's first or second post-secondary major. This constitutes an area of specialization defined by the Media Form as a subject area in which a teacher has "completed three or more full year university courses or equivalents."

Mismatch - this refers to a discrepancy between a teacher's area of specialization or post-secondary major, and the subject(s) taught by that teacher.

Other institutions - this refers to Faculties of Education and the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS). Personnel from these institutions were interviewed for the study.

Permit - this is authorization allowing a person to teach who "has completed the academic requirements but lacks the educational requirements, or who lacks both the academic and educational requirements."*

Teaching assignment - this refers to subject(s) a teacher is teaching one third (1/3) time or more.

B. Limitations

The reader should note the following limitations while reading this report:

1. Due to practical constraints, it was not possible to include all Manitoba school divisions in the study. Therefore, the study provides an indication of situations existing in Manitoba, but the results cannot be generalized to all school divisions.

2. Due to problems and omissions within Media File data, the extent to which teachers in Manitoba are teaching subjects for which they are not trained cannot be exactly calculated. Moreover, discrepancies appeared between the majors teachers reported on the survey instrument and those listed for the same teachers in the Media File.

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*Source: Teacher Certification and Records Branch, Department of Education.

3. Administrator responses were gathered using two different techniques. Superintendents were interviewed; principals were surveyed. While the instrument used was the same in both instances, the varying methods may have resulted in different responses.

4. Two groups in the study may be under-represented. Only one division had a designated French consultant. The response rate was low for professional development chairpersons, yielding four useable responses from the seven divisions.

5. As with any attitudinal measurement, responses to survey and interview instruments are to be regarded as perceptions of the respondents.

C. Highlights and Conclusions

1. Discrepancy Between Teacher Qualifications and Teaching Assignments

- Teachers included in the sample were those who, according to the Media File, appeared to fall into a "mismatched" category. However, results of the survey indicated that 81% of these respondents had a post-secondary major in at least one of the subjects they were teaching "1/3 time or more."
- Of the 311 subjects reported by teachers as being taught "1/3 time or more", 42% were being taught by teachers without a corresponding major in that particular subject.

It was concluded that more teachers had a post-secondary major related to their teaching assignment than was evident by analysis of Media File data. However, also included in the teaching assignments of many teachers were other subjects for which they did not have a related major.

2. Specific Areas of Discrepancy Between Teacher Qualifications and Teaching Assignments

- Teachers of French language subjects constituted the largest group (10%) of teachers certified in 1980-81 with credentials from outside Manitoba. The second largest group in a specific subject area were Music teachers (9%).
- A total of half the permits issued to teachers in divisions included in the study were in French and Music.
- Six of seven superintendents felt there were teachers in their division teaching subjects for which they were not trained. They most frequently cited French instruction as the area affected.
- Sixty percent of principals felt there were teachers in their school teaching subjects for which they were not trained; most frequently in the area of Science, followed by French.
- Two of six Special Education co-ordinators thought there were teachers designated to Special Education who were not trained in the area.

It was concluded that the area of French language instruction was an area of teacher shortage as well as a subject area where discrepancies occurred between teacher qualifications and teaching assignment. It was also concluded the areas of Science and Music were potential problem areas.

3. Attitudes Towards Teaching Assignments

- For the teaching subject teachers reported first, at least 70% had training or preparation as a result of a "university major/ minor", "training in preservice", "on the job experience" and "inservicing."

- Percentages decreased for the second and third subjects reported, with categories of "on the job experience" and "inservicing" being the only categories to be reported more than 50% of the time.

- Approximately 30% of teachers indicated a desire to change their teaching assignment. Those teachers who did not hold a relevant major most often wanted a change in order to utilize their major or training.

- Fifty percent of 173 teacher respondents felt they were "well trained" to deal with special needs students in their classrooms.

It was concluded that although teachers had a variety of training or qualifications in one subject, the other subjects in their teaching assignment did not exhibit the same background. It was also concluded that an important rationale for teachers who wished to change their teaching assignment, was the desire to teach something more closely related to their training. It was concluded that dealing with special needs students was something many teachers did not feel well prepared to undertake.

4. Numbers of Teachers Required in the Area of French Language Instruction

- Five of the seven superintendents and 70% of principals anticipated need for an increased number of French teachers in the next two years.

- Overall, immersion teachers appear to be most in demand.

- In order to accommodate the needs of five of the seven divisions surveyed, it appeared that a total of 30 additional French teachers would be required in each of the next two years.

It was concluded that a steady demand for teachers of French will continue over the next two years, especially in the area of immersion.

5. Teacher Training and Retraining

- Teachers were more likely than administrators to feel retraining opportunities were "unsatisfactory" (45% of teachers).

- Support and encouragement by the administration appeared to be a major reason for satisfaction, while geographic location appeared to be a major factor causing dissatisfaction.

- However, 68% of teachers in Frontier School Division were satisfied with retraining opportunities.

- Subjects to be emphasized in retraining/inservicing varied by respondent group. Teachers emphasized Science, Physical Education, Mathematics and Language Arts; principals stressed Language Arts, Science, as well as French and Français; while superintendents cited immersion and Français specialist areas and computer-related areas.

- Teachers most often stated "inservicing" as the method they would like for further training.

- Three-quarters of teachers who did not have a major in one of the subjects they were teaching (1/3 time or more) expressed interest in further training in a subject area they were currently teaching.

- All Special Education Co-ordinators, all personnel from other institutions, six of seven superintendents, 80% of principals and 75% of teachers would like to see changes in the way classroom teachers are trained/prepared to deal with special needs students.

- Changes suggested for the preservice level included the need for more practical classroom experience.

- Individualization and inservicing tailored to local needs were seen as ways of improving inservicing.

- Teachers felt inservicing opportunities should be more varied so that they could "keep up-to-date."

- Suggested retraining options included: six week courses in conjunction with follow-up provided by new technology; and, the use of "master teacher" and Faculty of Education staff exchanges.

It was concluded that distance was a factor hindering retraining opportunities but it was a problem which could be combatted. It was concluded that administrative support increased teacher satisfaction with retraining opportunities. It was also concluded that inservicing was a service valued by teachers, although improvements in its delivery would be desirable. It was further concluded that changes in the way classroom teachers are prepared/trained to deal with special needs students are necessary.

D. Implications

The implications arising out of this study are directly related to the foregoing highlights and conclusions. However, as the objectives of the study are inter-related, the implications will attempt to consolidate findings under general headings. These include: shortage areas; French language instruction; Special Education; teacher qualifications; teacher training and retraining; and Media File data.

1. Shortage Areas

Analysis of various data sources indicated that a shortage of teachers for certain areas still remains. However, teachers in the field did not indicate these subject areas as ones in which they would like further training or retraining. Perhaps, if more information were disseminated to teachers regarding areas of shortage, teacher interest in these areas might increase. Also, it would seem practical to channel perservice students into shortage areas.

The area of French language instruction might provide some exceptions, if only because analysis in Part I of this report* indicated that a number of teachers stated they were "qualified to instruct in French" but were not presently doing so. However, a follow-up of these teachers would be necessary in order to determine their attitudes towards changing their teaching assignment.

2. French Language Instruction

As discussed, some teachers in the field might be utilized to help fill positions for French language teachers. However, with a steadily increasing demand for teachers of French, a number of options will have to be considered. Moreover, the demand in the area of immersion may draw teachers to divisions in close proximity to Winnipeg where demand is highest. If these teachers are moving from Français to immersion classes some inservicing or retraining may be necessary. Therefore, inservicing/retraining options should be considered as part of the solution, in conjunction with encouraging preservice students to enter areas of French language instruction.

*See: Part I: Summary of 1980-81 Statistics on Potential Teachers of French, October 1981.

3. Special Education

The majority of special education co-ordinators did not indicate there was a problem with the training or qualifications of teachers specifically designated to special needs students. However, the consensus among all groups surveyed was that many classroom teachers were not well prepared to deal with special needs students. Therefore, increased exposure during preservice, as well as special inservices for classroom teachers might help to alleviate this problem.

4. Teacher Qualifications

Although many teachers had one teaching subject for which they had a related major, this subject was often the same one in which teachers had other qualifications (eg. training in preservice, inservicing, etc.). A discrepancy between teacher qualifications and teaching assignments appeared less frequently than Media File data indicated when observed on a respondent basis. It surfaced instead when analysis was conducted on a subject by subject basis. Perhaps declining enrollments have had the impact of giving teachers varied teaching loads, which include both subjects for which they do and do not have training or preparation. Long range planning, or perhaps a reassessment of present staff allocation by divisions, might help to remedy the situation.

It was also noted that three-quarters of teachers who did not have a major in any subject they taught, indicated a desire to change teaching assignments. The most frequent reason given was that they wanted to utilize their area of expertise. It appeared that teachers preferred to teach subjects for which they felt qualified.

Both teachers who have some subjects for which they do not have training, as well as those who do not teach any subjects for which they have related training, are potential users of inservicing and retraining.

5. Teacher Training and Retraining

It was suggested that the preservice area could be improved by more exposure to the area of Special Education and more practical classroom experience for student teachers. It is also important to emphasize the channelling of students into shortage areas. Better information dissemination to high school students considering the teaching profession as a career might aid in this process. Moreover, special opportunity bursaries could be used as a vehicle to encourage students to enter areas of "critical need" (eg. French language instruction).

It should be noted, that teachers usually wanted retraining or inservicing in areas they were presently teaching. Administrators, on the other hand, seemed to suggest teachers could be retrained to teach shortage subjects. Perhaps more publicity concerning areas of need, combined with incentives for retraining (eg. credit courses, bursaries), would encourage some teachers to retrain in these areas.

However, a clientele which could take advantage of more and better inservicing and retraining opportunities does appear to exist. Teachers appeared predisposed to the inservice method, but they wanted inservicing that provided more specialized options. This suggests individualized retraining opportunities. Utilization of new modes of interactive technology may aid in the development of alternative inservicing and retraining options.

6. Media File Data

The analysis conducted for this report highlighted difficulties with data found in the Media File. Omissions, and discrepancies between Media File data and survey data, confounded some analyses. If Media File data is to be utilized for planning or for secondary analysis, some revisions to the form should be considered.